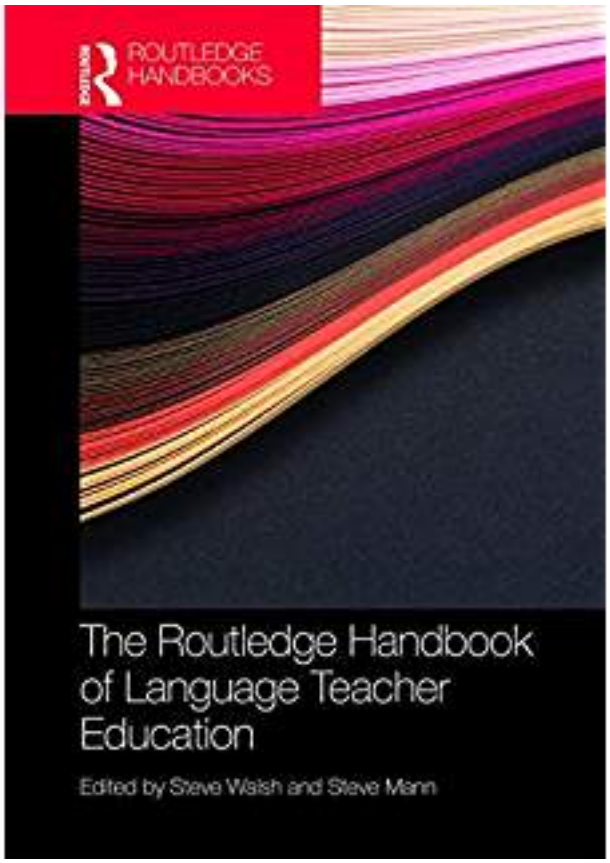

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Chapter 7 *Suggestions for teacher educators from a gentle iconoclast and a fellow explorer* (96-108 in book; 96-114 because of larger font and a few more references.)

John F. Fanselow and Takaaki Hiratsuka

John F. Fanselow is professor emeritus at Teachers College, Columbia University and a faculty member of the International Teacher Education Institute—iTDi. His main interest has been observation and analysis of interactions, both inside and outside of

classrooms. His publications reflect this interest. In ‘It’s too damn tight!’ he illustrated major differences in how we talk about objects inside and outside of classes and used some common spoken words for the first time in the *TESOL Quarterly*. ‘Beyond Rashomon’ and ‘Let's see’, two of his seminal articles in the *TESOL Quarterly* led to *Breaking Rules* (Longman, 1987) and *Contrasting Conversations* (Longman, 1992). *Small changes in teaching, big results in learning--Videos, activities and essays to stimulate fresh thinking about language teaching and learning* (iTDi, 2017) illustrates practices he has been exploring since his first teaching job in 1961 in Nigeria. In addition to teaching and writing, he has been active professionally, serving as second vice president and president of TESOL and president of New York TESOL. In 2005, John received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Columbia University, Teachers College.

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Suggestions for teacher educators from a gentle iconoclast and a fellow explorer

John F. Fanselow and Takaaki Hiratsuka

Abstract

In this chapter, we have a personal conversation between two teacher educators. I, John, have been writing, speaking about, teaching, analysing recordings of classes and conversations with teachers and exploring how we teach and how we prepare teachers for decades. I, Takaaki, am a member of the more recent 'seekers' who want to understand what we do in new ways by questioning accepted practices, changing them in small ways and comparing the results. Our conversation enabled us to enhance a shared understanding of key elements of language teacher education and develop several suggestions for teacher educators. We believe that teacher educators should be encouraged to (a) make language teacher education a joint endeavour among the teacher educators, teachers and students; (b) generate teaching alternatives by trying the opposite and by using coding schemes; (c) cultivate teacher and learner autonomy by believing in their capacity—we can all do more than we think we can; (d) make small changes and attend to minute details; and (e) record and transcribe classroom interactions to see how what we think we did, what we actually did, and what we want to do are quite different events.

Chapter 7

For some, *iconoclast* has a negative connotation because it suggests attacking: breaking images. We hope the *gentle* before *iconoclast* makes the connotation less negative in our title (suggested by Alan Maley). Preceding *iconoclast* with *gentle* is a great example of an oxymoron. By using *gentle*, we hope to convey our intention is to explore everything, not to attack anything. If we do not question what we do and the results, we cannot make discoveries. Jacob Bronowski (1956) in *Science and Human Values* put it this way: 'In science and in art and in self-knowledge, we explore and move constantly by turning to the world of sense to ask, "Is this so?" This is the habit of truth, always minute yet always urgent' (p. 43).

I, John, have been writing, speaking about, teaching, analysing recordings of classes and conversations with teachers and exploring how we teach and how we prepare teachers for decades. I, Takaaki, am a member of the more recent 'seekers' who want to

understand what we do in new ways by questioning accepted practices, changing them in small ways and comparing the results. Here is our interaction about teacher education:

Takaaki: *Though I want to discuss how you decided that we need to explore what we do and the results, I want to ask you first how you got involved in teacher development. As I recall, your first experience was working with teachers in Nigeria.*

John: Yes, my first experience preparing teachers was as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nigeria, assigned to teach in a teacher training college. As background, The Peace Corps is an American organisation started by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 to send Americans to other countries to learn about them, to return to the US and share what they learned and try to make some useful contribution to the countries they were sent to. Many countries have similar organisations such as VSO in the UK and JICA in Japan.

Takaaki: *Did you apply to be a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1961 because you were interested in teacher preparation?*

John: No. I applied to the Peace Corps to improve my Spanish. I wanted to be a volunteer to learn. But there were no openings for me in Latin America in 1961. It would have been quite presumptuous of me to apply to a programme to prepare teachers since I had taught only one English and one Spanish class for one semester in a high school.

Takaaki: *What did you teach at the Teacher Training College in Nigeria?*

John: English language and literature to raise the level of English of the teachers. And I used some methods in a demonstration classroom at the College that a British Council English Language Specialist, John Rogers, had demonstrated in my English classes. I also "supervised" practice teachers when teachers went to primary schools to practice methods they were learning on campus. During practice teaching, no classes were held on campus. Staff met at the college with the practice teachers that they had visited to discuss lessons observed and plan lessons for the next day.

Takaaki: *Tell me some of the fundamental lessons from your experiences in Nigeria and a suggestion that grew out of them.*

John: My first lesson, and the theme of my teaching and writing for five plus decades, is that I see my role as a partner with those who take my classes or participate in my workshops or read what I write. In Uyo, Nigeria, I learned very quickly that my role

was to jointly explore what questions each teacher had, jointly note what the teachers did, observe the results and then jointly generate another activity and compare the results. John Rogers, who observed my classes and demonstrated methods in my classes, was key to this idea. He did not say 'Do this because I said you should' but rather, 'Try this and let's compare what students wrote, said, read, etc. when we do X rather than Z.' He was a collaborator rather than a dictator.

Takaaki: *Sounds like the representative was providing you what some call strategic mediation (Tharp & Gallimore 1988; Wertsch 1985) then. The kind of assistance that is tailored to meet trainees' needs and is adequately moderated. So, what else led you to see your responsibility as a joint exploration?*

John: Ignorance. I was being asked to supervise teachers who had 2 to 20 more years' experience than I had and who were teaching content that was unfamiliar to me. I knew less content than the teachers I was supposed to be supervising. And I was not familiar with any ESL methods until John gave us methods books and demonstrated in my classes many of the methods in the books. But I thought that if I understood their practices it would be easier for them to understand the alternative practices they had experienced in my classes. And it would be easier to find ways that alternative methods could supplement rather than replace the activities they were used to using.

Takaaki: *You said you knew less than the teachers, how did you translate this lesson into practice? I mean, how could you supposedly supervise them if you knew less about what they were teaching and how they were teaching than they did?*

John: In a few ways. Since I had never supervised a teacher in my life I did not know what I was going to do when I visited the practice teachers. So, before the visits, I met with the practice teachers and asked them what they wanted me to do as their "supervisor". They said they wanted to learn activities that would interest students more, ways to teach grammar and vocabulary that were less boring, and activities that would improve the language skills of the students faster than the ones they had been using. They also wanted to learn how to spend less time planning lessons so they would have more energy for teaching. I have been hearing questions similar to these through my entire career.

I also asked them to write down activities they used that they thought were effective. Here there was some divergence of opinion. And when I noted this, I realised that one way to expand the range of activities in addition to using ones that John had

introduced was to have teachers use each other's methods.

Takaaki: *And you did not have knowledge about what the primary students were learning?*

John: No. The Nigerian teachers were as you might expect teaching Nigerian history—what Lord Lugard did when he came to Nigeria and developed the constitution of 1914; Nigerian geography—the River Niger, groundnut and palm oil production, to name just a few areas I was totally ignorant of. They were not teaching American history or European history, which are courses I had taken. The fact that the teachers were teaching material that was completely unknown to me was an advantage because when I asked questions about the content I did not know the answer, I was exploring what they were teaching as well as how they were teaching

Takaaki: *It was a kind of natural information-gap then. So, my question is how you managed to think about alternative ways of teaching which they had said they were interested in?*

John: Fortunately for me, there were two sections of each primary class, which met at the same time. The teacher in each section taught the same subjects at the same time in the school I was in. So, I was able to observe one teacher in one section for twenty minutes doing math and the other one for the next twenty minutes. As you might expect, each teacher taught slightly differently. When I observed the two sections, I wrote down what each had done.

Some teachers gave directions aloud. Others wrote them on the board. Some teachers had their students copy sentences from the board and others asked their students to write what they said aloud and then wrote them on the board. When I met teachers at the end of the day, who both taught the same subject in two different streams, I would say, for example, 'Okon, Benedict wrote his directions on the board. You said them aloud. Tomorrow, try writing them on the board. And Benedict, you wrote the directions on the board, tomorrow try saying the directions aloud.' Or, 'Pius, you had your students underline the words they did not know and had them write a synonym above the unknown words. Okonkwo drew sketches on the board above words the students did not know. So tomorrow, try drawing a few sketches rather than writing synonyms. And Pius, have your students both draw sketches and write synonyms.'

Takaaki: *So, a key lesson for you was the importance of comparing two different*

practices and having the teachers try alternatives. This reminds me of some of the emergent concepts in the field such as interthinking (Mercer 1995) and dialogic praxis in teacher preparation (Bieler 2010).

John: I guess so, but I have not used those terms. They are new to me, but useful. And they resonate with how I described our role as teacher educators in *Contrasting Conversations* (Fanselow 1992a):

> I am going to observe you. Afterwards, when I look at excerpts from your lesson with you, I hope that through the analysis—playing with the words we use to discuss the lesson—we can see something we did not see before about our own teaching. Jointly comparing similarities and differences between your teaching practices and beliefs and my teaching is likely to reveal multiple interpretations of what we described. Let's explore teaching together. I came to your class not only with a magnifying glass to look carefully at what was being done, but with a mirror so that I could see that what you were doing is a reflection of much of what I do. (p. 2)

Takaaki: *So, when you told Pius to draw sketches because his fellow teacher had, I guess you were starting a conversation rather than prescribing and suggesting that sketches are better than synonyms.*

John: I like to think my suggestions to teachers are different from prescriptions. Why? Because as I imply in the quote from *Contrasting Conversations* I just read to you, I make suggestions to provide opportunities to compare what teachers routinely do with alternatives, not for them to adopt the option because I suggested it. I want the teachers to determine whether they adopt the alternative based on their analysis of the results of contrasting activities. Teachers are tired of hearing me say, 'Don't believe anything I say, or what anyone else says; question everything.' These admonitions are not helpful unless I enable teachers to generate alternatives to supplement what they are doing.

Takaaki: *John, when many hear your name, they think of your advice to try the opposite, the title of your 1992 book (Fanselow 1992b). Is this a way to enable teachers to generate alternatives?*

John: It is one way. But I have learned that the methods teachers create from doing the opposite are more powerful if we list some criteria for determining the likelihood that the opposite will be useful.

Takaaki: *Some criteria, huh? I'm intrigued.*

John: There are thousands of alternatives in teaching just as in medicine. Bloodletting was one used for hundreds of years in Western medicine but it killed more people than it helped. The criteria for this practice were based on a false premise that our body had 4 liquids.

If a teacher usually asks students to memorise 10 word equivalents each day with no context, one alternative is 0 word equivalents; but another is 20 word equivalents. The 0 option would mean the teacher realises that students use words incorrectly when they match them with a word in their first language and that content words need to be integrated with function words and that words have meanings only in context. The 20 word equivalent option is based on the assumption that we learn languages by memorising lists of words out of context. This alternative is like bloodletting—based on a faulty assumption. alternatives. The following are criteria that I have developed through the years for generating alternatives. Alternatives should:

- be easy to try for teachers and students
- require thinking, problem solving or prediction
- be novel
- integrate grammar and vocabulary
- enable students to use language rather than listen to the teacher talk about language
- provide incomplete information rather than complete information
- provide chances for students to change mediums, for example give students opportunities to change sketches into language, printed words into spoken words, spoken words into printed words, gestures into spoken words, etc.
- integrate the 4 skills plus attend to the 5th skill, emotions
- personalise the language used
- make only small change
- have students do activities that make use of what they already know

Takaaki: *Can you tell me some alternatives that meet some of these criteria?*

John: Reading aloud while holding a text and looking at it is a universal practice. One of the most powerful alternatives to reading aloud is read and look up. Michael West (1960), one of the authors John introduced me to, suggested we have learners read sense groups silently, put the text on the desk, think about the meaning and then say as much

as makes sense aloud. Both the student who reads the phrases plus the other students then write what was said. In Nigeria in 1961 of course I could not easily take a picture of the students doing the usual reading aloud and read and look up. But these days students can take selfies showing the differences between their usual practice and the alternative.

Look at the two freeze frames (Figure 7.1 and 7.2) from two videos of the same students doing reading aloud in 7.1 and read and look up in 7.2.

Figure 7.1

Figure 7.2

Many teachers who have seen the videos have titled usual reading aloud (7.1) *torture* or *frozen in time* and read and look up in 7.2 *engaging* or *animated.* Of course, others should not accept these interpretations but write their own.

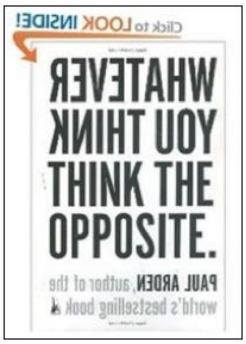
Takaaki: *When I first did read and look up, though, I dictated sense groups like this: The three men/ pushed the currach, from the beach/ into the water. They got into the currach/ and rowed to an island/ one kilometre away. And my students always stopped at currach, or whatever word they were not familiar with. How can we get our students to move on to understand groups of words rather than get caught up with individual words?*

John: Students should be asked to do read and look up only with passages they understand at least 95% of the words in. But even if they do not understand only one word, most students stop and focus on the word that is not familiar. While there are

many reasons for this, one is that an almost universal direction is to underline words students do not know. So, we teach students to ignore what is before and after words they are unfamiliar with. When teachers say, 'put a post it on words you do not know or cross them out and then look at the words you do know and write a word or draw a sketch on the word that stumps you', virtually all students demonstrate that they understood the meaning. In the case of *currach*, which is a word that hardly anyone will ever use, learners draw a small boat or write *boat* on the post it covering *currach.*

Takaaki: *I have been constantly amazed by how many words my students and I have been able to discover the meaning of. Of course word equivalents and definitions can be useful. But students cannot use dictionaries during exams so teaching them ways to discover meanings seems very important. On an unrelated point, I have seen some teachers use this method, but after a couple of weeks the students get tired of it. What should we do?*

John: *Homeostasis* is a fancy word for things returning to being stable. A central reason I urge teachers to constantly try the opposite is to enable them to continuously change what they do. If students are given a text in mirror writing (formed by writing in an opposite direction to the natural way: it appears normal when reflected in a mirror) as on the cover of this book, in a few weeks after they have become quite proficient in



reading and looking up with a regular text, they see that they can do more with a more difficult format. Extending the time between silent reading and speaking and listening and writing also raises the ante.

Another idea to keep students engaged is to have students record what they say after they read lines silently on their cell phones. They then can compare what they think they had said and wrote with what they actually said. The students who tried this made remarkable discoveries about how they had misunderstood what they had read.

Takaaki: *I would like to hear an example of a discovery.*

John: One pair of students had said and written, 'The internet was originally developed for ordinary citizens. And…' But after they listened to what they had said three times and saw what they wrote and compared their words with the text they discovered that they missed the word *not* and *rather*. The sentence was 'The internet was not originally developed for ordinary citizens. Rather…' On the top of the page of the English textbooks, words such as *originally, developed, ordinary*, etc. were printed—all content words. No function or grammar words. I have not seen any textbook or observed any class in which teachers wrote so called key words that included words like *a, it, not*.

Takaaki: *I am fascinated by the possibilities of the use of technology and your point about grammar or function words or structural words. Tell me more.*

John: In Nigeria I could not record the teachers or myself. But these days with so many students having smart phones they can record themselves and compare how they do read and look up, on different days. They can see their progress. In the same way, these two students who compared what they had said and written discovered they had missed two grammar words—*not* and *rath*er. I think that when students notice features of language together they are learning also ways to learn. And when teachers see what language students are having trouble with, they can see what to focus on in their teaching. I believe that a central part of teacher preparation is to teach teachers how to continue to develop their teaching on their own and with colleagues after they complete a course. In the same way, we need to show teachers how to show students ways to learn on their own and with peers.

Takaaki: *So you want teachers and students to take control of important aspects of their teaching and learning. Sounds like you consider teacher and learner autonomy (Benson 2013) to be critical for their growth.*

John: I have taught workshops with *autonomy* in the title but I think we need to deal with this idea in *all* of our courses.

Takaaki: *You said earlier that trying the opposite with criteria to predict the degree to which students would be engaged was one way to expand the range of tasks teachers set. What is another way we can try to be more autonomous and responsible as professionals?*

John: Another way is to use a coding system. I introduced one in my article: 'Beyond *Rashomon* – conceptualizing and describing the teaching act' (Fanselow 1977). I noted

five characteristics of communications in the article but suggested we focus on just one or two at a time. One characteristic is the *medium*—spoken or written language, sketches, gestures, and silence, to cite a few. Another is the *content* that is communicated. One area is *language* with subcategories such as pronunciation, vocabulary, function or grammar words, and word order.

In sketches and photos of many nouns the name of what is shown is printed without the article. Posters showing fruits, vegetables, animals, etc. around the world usually have labels under the pictures such as *apple, bean, and dog*. Ditto for the captions in dictionaries under sketches of *elephants, roses*, etc. Teachers usually write nouns on the board without the articles also.

Takaaki: *Again, function or grammar words are taken lightly!*

John: Yes and no. Teachers give rules for their use and textbooks also contain rules for the use of *the, an* and *a*. But knowing rules and using grammar correctly are two unrelated events. An alternative to rules that would enable students to more likely master the use of articles in English would be to combine grammatical information—the articles—with lexical or experiential information—*apple*, *rose.* Of course you do not have to code the captions on posters or in dictionaries to generate the alternative of writing nouns that require an article with an article—*rose* and *a rose*. But if you code the *medium—linguistic visual*, *content vocabulary* you might notice that *content*, *grammar words* is not present—*rose* and *a rose*. Some teachers asked students to draw sketches for the grammar words—*a, an* and *the*, thus combining *grammar words content* with a *non-linguistic medium*, *sketches*. So many students drew the same symbols: one dot for *a*, ・, two for *an*, ・・, and a dot in a circle for *the*. We store written and spoken language and symbols in different parts of our brains. If students can access meanings from spoken and written meanings and symbols of the same meanings, they have three areas they can access rather than just one or two.

As teacher educators, I think we should provide educational philosophies to support alternatives or ask teachers we work with to find support in the fields of psychology or second language acquisition to give credence to different practices.

Takaaki: *These seem obvious but until you had pointed out that we should consider read and look up and integrating grammar and vocabulary I had not noticed that I was in fact making it difficult for my students to improve their reading or use articles. Coding pointed out details I had not seen.*

John: Gregory Bateson (1972), an English social scientist, once claimed that the obvious is difficult to see. This is one reason I think it is so crucial to record what we do and transcribe it with our students. Then we can generate alternatives by trying the opposite or by coding. There is no need for the students to learn a coding system. But for teachers it can be useful. Coding provides us with a more systematic way to expand the range of what we do and to check to see if in fact we have made the planned substitution of one category for another in the alternative.

Takaaki: *You said introducing a coding system was another way to prepare teachers to continue to develop on their own after they finish their degrees. You said you used your own coding system but that means there are others.*

John: There are many systems. In the heydays of classroom observation in the eighties, Dick Allwright (1988) edited a collection of observation schemes, some of which were less complex than mine. In my classes some teachers found it easier to use FOCUS after they used other systems first.

Takaaki: *In class, I do not remember you ever mentioning how you became interested in coding or to use perhaps a less daunting word, grouping.*

John: Yes, *coding* and *classification* do not seem friendly to many. Grouping we all do. When we look at a menu we see food grouped as appetizers, soups, meat, fish, pasta, desserts, drinks—beer alcohol, soft, coffee and tea. We do not see the food listed in alphabetical order or in the number of calories each food provides. But what is different about a menu and coding and classification is that these show relationships that are not obvious. In botany when I learned that strawberries and roses were in the same family I was ecstatic seeing relationships that are not that obvious. Of course, at the time I was not teaching so I saw no relationship between the taxonomies in botany and the grouping of foods on menus and observing teachers. But at Teachers College, a senior colleague, Arno Bellack and his team had published a book called *The language of the classroom* (1966).

Takaaki*: Since you used Bellack's system as a basis for FOCUS why didn't you title your book The language of the ESOL classroom, rather than Breaking rules*?

John: First, my book was not a descriptive study as Bellack's was. Second, I wanted to encourage teachers to move beyond the usual interactions. Most classrooms

are teacher centered and focus on facts for their own sake. The sub-title of the book is *Generating and exploring alternatives.* I think as teacher educators we have a responsibility to model ways for teachers to question accepted practices.

Takaaki*: O.K. So, how about you and small changes? When did you start to explicitly urge teachers to make small changes?*

John: Although I suggested over many years that teachers should try the opposite practices after understanding what they do by recording and transcribing their lessons, it was not till my last book (Fanselow 2017) that I highlighted that the changes that teachers make when they try the opposite should be small. I mentioned this in my previous publications but not so explicitly till I used the idea in my latest book.

Takaaki: *Why is this idea of small changes so important in the preparation of teachers?*

John: For a couple of reasons. First, teachers are busy, often teaching more than 100 students each day, and so they might not be able to manage large changes in their daily teaching practices. Second, if there are big changes it is hard to see which of the changes produced a different result. Some think that all I am suggesting is that teachers make changes and then decide whether the changes work or do not work.

Unless the changes are small, we cannot determine what the *it* in 'It works' is. Nor can we see what *works* means. When I told Pius to draw sketches and compare this with defining words the change was small and it was reasonably easy to compare the results. I say reasonably easy because I had to depend on what I heard and wrote when I observed the two practices. But these days we can record and see very precisely the effects of a small change.

Takaaki: *Can you give me another example of what you consider a small change? When I first heard this suggestion, I did not really understand it.*

John: More recently I have made this mantra more accessible by inviting teachers to make small changes. I asked them to write down or photograph or record small changes in their lives that produce big results outside of classrooms. Teachers mention taking vitamins to keep their blood healthy, Lipitor to decrease cholesterol, for example. Others say that their flu shots inject a very small amount of vaccine but the liquid prevents a lot of misery. A blister 1/2 inch in diameter can prevent us from walking. Sunglasses can decrease the number of headaches we get on hot, sunny days.

Takaaki: *I know you have many more other references in your books. I would say you seem to strongly believe that making small changes would lead to generating more*

creative teaching which Maley and Kiss (2017) so strongly advocate. What are some of other suggestions regarding how to prepare teachers based on your experiences seeing lessons and reading about lessons?

John: As I mentioned when you asked me what I taught, colleagues and I did demonstration lessons. There were desks for up to 40 primary school students in the front half of the demonstration classroom and tiered seats for 40 to observe the lesson. We taught a few lessons each week before practice teaching to show teachers activities they were not familiar with. A limitation of these "demos" was that when we discussed them we had to depend on memory and comments the observers made. We had no data to analyse. In a 40-minute lesson there can be a few hundred communications made by the teacher and from 20 to 60 students. These days we can have students record on their cell phones. We can make copies of the pages in their notebooks to provide more data and we photograph what the teacher or students did on the board.

Takaaki: *So, another suggestion is that those who prepare teachers should actually teach classes, in tandem with the teachers, to illustrate activities that you all read about. And you suggest we do this by carefully paying attention to the details. I remember that during my MA courses you always taught parts of some classes that we were teaching and we videotaped them.*

John: I have always taught classes of practice teachers I observed. If I were a soccer coach, I think I could suggest movements and plays to players that I could not myself do and the players would understand this. Coaches tend to be older than players and less agile. But in the case of teaching, I think we need to try out what we suggest. Teachers can then see that just as they might forget some steps or ignore some students so do we.

These days when we can record and then jointly view what we both did with the same students, teachers feel more relaxed about seeing themselves. When I visit a school the second or third time and teach a lesson or part of a lesson both the students and their teachers feel as if what we do is normal, not something special. The teachers see changes I make that are in some ways similar to ones they make.

Takaaki: *So, you have been following the model you experienced in Nigeria—students learned English with alternative activities they read about and saw you and others demonstrate, and they tried the activities and looked at your transcriptions of what they did and made small changes based on differences between what each and a colleague did.*

John: After I returned to the US from Nigeria, I was involved in Peace Corps training programmes at Teachers College. Almost all the trainees were native speakers but part of training was immersion in languages of the countries they were bound for. So, they experienced the methods as learners and as teachers and observed themselves and others on videos or listened to recordings.

Takaaki: *Now, I have read a lot about and conducted research on reflective teaching which to me is a key area of study in language teacher education. I have these on my notes in front of me: Farrell (2007, 2015), Gebhard (2017), Hiratsuka (2017), and Mann and Walsh (2017). To what extent has this field been important to you?*

John: Though I do not use the term much, I attach importance to many of the ideas and activities in that field. Many of the suggestions made by those who discuss reflective teaching are similar to some of my suggestions. My obsession with recording and transcribing and comparing what we usually do with small changes and constantly changing what we do are somewhat distinctive, though.

Takaaki: *To me, the few suggestions we just discussed seem somewhat unrelated to reflective teaching. Do you see a connection?*

John: I think there are some connections. When I ask teachers to generate alternatives I ask them to use these criteria to determine which alternatives are more likely to engage students. All of the suggestions focus on the joint analysis of detailed data—teachers, observers, supervisors, and those who prepare teachers. We must interpret the data from many perspectives by asking questions such as: "What else might this indicate? What is another way we can see this as helpful or not helpful?"

We can only analyse detailed data if we have small amounts of it. I suggest a transcription that fits on one page of A4 paper. And we can only understand what is going on if we look at what we do on a regular basis, once a week I consider a minimum. Of course teachers are busy but as we analyse what we do we can simultaneously plan what to do the next day. Seeing what students produce decreases the need for preparing and grading tests.

Takaaki: *Yeah it makes sense and this is interesting. Now, I have always wanted to ask you this, but as somebody who has been a guru in our field, what do you think is lacking from current language teacher education programmes?*

John: As a teacher educator, I have always invited people to do workshops in various areas such as The Silent Way, Jazz Chants and Autonomy, to name a few. If I were asked to suggest to those establishing a new MA programme I would enrich the range of workshops a great deal. Here are a few areas that I think would broaden teachers' experiences of how we learn: phone applications, computer games, voice projection, mime, yoga, drama, dance, singing and directing singers, arts and crafts, cooking, knitting, guitar. Well, I could go on and on. But maybe a bit of a rationale, gleaned from comments from teachers who have experienced these activities. They said:

We are reminded of how many times we have to experience something to master it; that much of language learning is connecting language with experience; that experiences of our minds, bodies and language are interconnected; that some of us are good on one activity and not so good at another so we are reminded not to disparage students who cannot say, write, or spell but to tap what they are good at.

Takaaki: I see. But your suggestion to language education programmes involves only people outside the classroom conducting workshops for students though. I thought you learned in Nigeria that it was important for students to actually experience methods they were going to use in the classroom.

John: Ideally, there would be opportunities for teachers to do mime in a class, record the event and discuss it with the person who did the mime workshop. But it would be very difficult to do so unless a teacher has private students or sponsors an English language club at school.

Takaaki: *Providing hands-on workshops as well as trying out mime, etc. sound very non-academic to me. Shouldn't teacher education programmes be a place to learn academic and scientific knowledge?*

John: They are indeed non-academic. I think the balance between doing and reading and writing in teacher preparation programmes has shifted away from doing these days. It seems to me that more hands-on experiences are necessary for the teachers. Reading about SLA, sociolinguistics, pedagogical grammar, etc. can be very intellectually stimulating. Discussing and writing about articles in such fields can be too. But teaching is not an intellectual activity and the influence reading and writing have on what we do is very small. When we do feel the need to read those texts in the field, I suggest that teachers read fewer but read them a few times. There is so much information in all of the areas in our field, much of it quite sophisticated. So, one reading is almost the same as no reading. Those who read fewer articles more but each more many times say they can apply some of the ideas better.

Takaaki: *We are almost there, but in the back of my mind and of many teachers, maybe often in the front of our minds is that there are so may constraints on what we can do that is different. As you know, there are texts we have to cover, tests to give, and external exams to prepare for that prevent us from trying to teach in different ways. Colleagues resent changes and students balk at things they are not used to. Clarke (2007) deals with other restraints in our contexts as well. What can we do about it?*

John: For the students who balk and colleagues who resent change, I have suggested that we spend 5-minutes on an alternative each day, selecting ones that students can use on their own outside of class to develop their English. Also, many schools have English clubs. In these, teachers can have students try out self-learning activities and get feedback from their teachers.

But read and look up, drawing sketches for words they are unfamiliar with, and symbols for grammar words over time students find them more engaging than the memorisation, fill in the blanks, talking about language or translation standard fare. They also see that they do better on tests after using English rather than memorising rules and definitions. So over time the 5-minutes can be extended.

Takaaki: *John, it has been such a refreshing conversation I have had with you.*

John: See how judgements come so easily to us. Let's let the readers decide if it was really a refreshing conversation.

Takaaki: *O.K. For me, though, it was truly an engaging conversation and maybe I can summarise some of what has been powerful for me in what you said. Through our conversation, I learned that we should be encouraged to: (a) make language teacher education a joint endeavour among the teacher educators, teachers and students; (b) generate teaching alternatives by trying the opposite and by using coding schemes; (c) cultivate teacher and learner autonomy by believing in their capacity—we can all do more than we think we can; (d) make small changes and attend to minute details; and (e) record and transcribe classroom interactions to see how what we think we did, what we actually did, and what we want to do are quite different events. Thank you, John. Any final suggestion for those of us especially in the younger generation in our preparation of teachers?*

John: You are one type of "younger person" but children we can also think of as younger. And of course even people in their eighties and nineties can be young at heart. So, to me, a key feature of *young* is more than age. Now, let me read you a short quote from Thomas Huxley referring to a child: 'Sit down before what you see and hear like a little child, and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss Nature leads, or you shall learn nothing." A couple of insights I take from this. First, try everything. Two year olds often pick up snow the first time they experience it and put it in their mouths. Some around four seeing a straw for the first time put it in their drink and then their nose! Leonardo da Vinci put a straw in his ear to hear the sound of water at different depths. When children try things they often smile and laugh. They see jumping down three steps at a time as joyful. They run and laugh at the same time, thrilled by seeing they can do something they could not do a few days before. They have a playful spirit.

In preparing teachers as well as in our teaching of language learners a playful spirit, scepticism and openness to imagine all the possibilities are crucial. Alan Maley has, through the years both in his teaching and writing, exemplified this spirit of playfulness as much or more than any in our field. A model of playfulness.

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Further Reading

Gurrey, P. [1955] *Teaching English as a foreign language*, London, Longman.
-Gurrey in his 1955 edition introduced a grid showing nine types of questions. He urged teachers to move beyond the predominant fact questions in the classroom (e.g., What is the longest river in Nigeria?) to inferential and experiential questions made up of either-or and yes-no questions (e.g., Does the longest river in Nigeria start with C?; Have you visited Onitsha and seen the River Niger?).

Barnes, D. [1976] *From communication to curriculum*, Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.
-Douglas Barnes analysed interactions in middle schools and introduced two different knowledge: 'school knowledge' and 'action knowledge'. According to him, school knowledge is the knowledge presented to us by someone else; whereas, action knowledge is the knowledge that is incorporated into our view of the world on which our actions are based. He encourages us to provide action knowledge, rather than school knowledge, in language teacher education so that we are able to better make sense of new experience by relating it to the old experience.

Fanselow, J.F. and Light, R.L. [eds] [1977] *Bilingual, ESOL and foreign language teacher preparation: Models, practices, issues*, Washington, D.C.: TESOL.
-Fanselow and Light reflect the two differing perspectives in teacher education. One perspective maintains that guidelines and the time-honoured practices in teacher preparation would form a sufficient base for the development of those teachers. The other argues that teacher preparation needs reforming and can only be carried forward effectively with a number of stipulations, for example, through a competency-based approach. After four decades, the perspectives and discussions in the book are still important and relevant in the world of language teacher education.